

Message Text

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DRAFTED BY NEA/AFN:DLJAMESON

APPROVED BY P - MR. SISCO

INR/RNA/NE:JFRERES

EUR/SOV:RMILES

NEA :ALATHERTON

S/S - MR. MOFFAT

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TO AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

INFO AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

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TAGS: PFOR, UR, LY, EG

SUBJECT: IRANIAN INQUIRY ON SOVIET AID TO LIBYA

REF: TEHRAN 5351

1. YOU MAY DRAW ON THE FOLLOWING IN RESPONDING TO THE
IRANIAN INQUIRY:

2. OUR INFORMATION IS THAT THE LIBYAN-SOVIET ARMS DEAL
TOTALS BETWEEN 700 MILLION AND 1 BILLION DOLLARS. THE
ARMS TO BE SUPPLIED APPARENTLY INCLUDE SOPHISTICATED
WEAPONS WHICH WILL LIKELY REQUIRE AN INCREASE IN THE
NUMBER OF SOVIET TECHNICAL PERSONNEL IN LIBYA. WE HAVE
NO EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT REPORTS THAT THE SOVIETS WERE

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GRANTED BASE RIGHTS, WHICH BOTH THE SOVIETS AND LIBYANS

HAVE PUBLICLY DENIED. IT IS MORE PROBABLE THAT THE SOVIETS HAVE ACQUIRED RIGHTS TO UTILIZE LIBYAN PORTS AND AIRFIELDS ON A REGULAR BASIS.

3. THE LIBYANS CLEARLY DO NOT HAVE THE TRAINED MANPOWER TO OPERATE THE SOPHISTICATED EQUIPMENT THEY HAVE PURCHASED AND MAY INTEND TO TRANSFER MUCH OF IT TO OTHER ARAB STATES IN THE EVENT OF ANOTHER MIDEAST WAR. HOWEVER, GIVEN QADHAFI'S ABHORRENCE OF COMMUNISM AND CONTINUING SUSPICION OF THE RUSSIANS, IT IS UNLIKELY THAT THE SOVIETS WILL HAVE MUCH INFLUENCE ON THE ULTIMATE DISPOSITION OF THE WEAPONS ONCE THEY ARE IN LIBYAN HANDS. QADHAFI UNDOUBTEDLY VIEWS THE WEAPONS AS BARGAINING CHIPS TO USE AS LEVERAGE OVER EGYPT AND POSSIBLY OTHER ARAB STATES. HE ALSO HAS LONG TERM AMBITIONS FOR BUILDING HIS OWN POWER AND INFLUENCE.

4. SOVIET MOTIVES IN CONCLUDING THE DEAL APPEAR MIXED. THE SOVIETS PROBABLY HOPE TO PUT PRESSURE ON SADAT BY DEMONSTRATING TO THE EGYPTIAN ARMED FORCES THE ADVANTAGES TO BE GAINED FROM A CLOSE RELATIONSHIP WITH THE USSR. THROUGH THE PRESENCE OF ADDITIONAL PERSONNEL AND THE USE OF LIBYAN FACILITIES THE SOVIETS WILL ALSO BE ABLE TO ENHANCE THEIR PRESENCE IN THIS STRATEGIC REGION ON THE MEDITERRANEAN. THE SUBSTANTIAL FOREIGN EXCHANGE PROCEEDS FROM THE SALE WERE UNDOUBTEDLY AN ADDITIONAL SIGNIFICANT FACTOR IN SOVIET CALCULATIONS.

5. IN OUR ESTIMATE THE IMMEDIATE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE SOVIET-LIBYAN ARMS AGREEMENT LIES IN THE FACT THAT IT STRENGTHENS THE HAND OF A REGIME WHICH HAS RESISTED ALL ATTEMPTS TO BRING ABOUT A PEACE SETTLEMENT IN THE AREA AND HAS ACTED AS A GENERALLY DESTABILISING ELEMENT. KISSINGER

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